

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5305

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, January 29, 2007
Ways & Means, February 28, 2007

Title: An act relating to extending medicaid coverage for foster youth.

Brief Description: Extending medicaid coverage for foster youth.

Sponsors: Senators Franklin, Hargrove, Brandland, Eide, Hobbs, Spanel, Swecker, McAuliffe, Regala, Kauffman, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, Tom, Murray, Zarelli, Jacobsen, Keiser, Shin, Honeyford, Parlette, Rasmussen, Roach, Kline and Marr.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/22/07, 1/29/07 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/07/07, 2/28/07 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Marr and Parlette.

Staff: Mich'l Needham (786-7442)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5305 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Fairley, Hatfield, Hewitt, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

Staff: Elaine Deschamps (786-7441)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services provides programs for youth in foster care generally through age 18, unless the youth is in school or in treatment. In addition to foster care placement services, the Department may provide medical coverage through Medicaid or the Medical Assistance Program.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Medical coverage is generally available through age 18 for all children covered by Medicaid. A few young adults between 18 and 21 that remain in foster care maintain eligibility for medical assistance.

Summary of Bill: Eligibility for Medicaid or Medical Assistance is extended for youth that were in foster care on their 18th birthday, up to age 21, irrespective of continuing placement in foster care.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Ways & Means): It is clarified that eligibility is effective on or after the effective date of this act, eliminating retroactive eligibility, and it is confirmed that the department is to use existing foster care eligibility standards for this expansion group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original; requested for substitute on March 5, 2007.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Extending eligibility for medical coverage to age 21 will help these youth transition into adulthood. Many foster youth have extensive medical challenges and need on-going access to medical care. This eligibility change has been done by a dozen other states already.

OTHER: The bill needs some clarification on the effective date and the potential impact on youth that have already aged-out of eligibility.

Persons Testifying (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Delilah Bruskas, Connected Youth; Joseph LeRoy, Pierce County Alliance; Ashly Pfonenstier, foster child; Casey Trupin, Columbia Legal Services; Jim Theofelis, Samuel Martin, Jamica Henderson, Mellissa Stringer, Mockingbird Society; Michelle Keating, YouthCare; Janice Avery, Treehouse.

OTHER: Manning Pellanda, Department of Social and Health Services.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill will help children leaving foster care become independent. Coverage for these youth will promote preventative medical care and lower utilization of emergency rooms, which will save the state money. The bill allows the state to leverage federal matching funds.

OTHER: We are working with staff on language to clarify the eligibility effective date. Funding is not provided in the Governor's budget.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Franklin, prime sponsor; Jim Theofelis, Mockingbird Society; Lelilah Bruskas, Connected Youth and Alumni Leaders of Tacoma; Daryl Daus, Washington Federation of State Employees; Daniele Baxter, Foster Parent Association of Washington State.

OTHER: Manning Pellanda, Department of Social and Health Services.